

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Science
Subcommittee on Research

International Polar Year: The Scientific Agenda and the Federal Role

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

Statement of Chairman Bob Inglis

Good morning. I want to welcome everyone, and thank you for coming to this morning's hearing on *International Polar Year: The Scientific Agenda and Federal Role*.

IPY does not begin officially until March 2007, but the immense planning and coordination for it began more than 3 years ago. The purpose for this morning's hearing is fairly simple...to learn all we can about International Polar Year (IPY), what role the U.S. will play in the upcoming one, and how this will be of benefit to the nation.

Most of us in this room are familiar, or at least somewhat familiar, with IPY and its immediate predecessor, the International Geophysical Year (IGY), but I wonder how much of the general public knows about all of the incredible scientific discoveries and advances that were made during IGY? I am pleased to see that education and outreach is a major component of the upcoming IPY. It is so important that we take this opportunity to instill excitement about science in our children and motivate future generations of scientists, much like the results of IGY inspired those we will be hearing from today to enter the fields that they did.

I've recently learned of one such educational program in my home state of South Carolina. As you can imagine, we are not necessarily known as the epicenter of polar studies, but USC Geologist Dr. Doug Williams and his team at the EdVenture Children's Museum in Columbia, SC, created a *Go Polar!* program that was simply impressive. While not IPY-specific, this program has made a variety of Arctic research accessible and easily understandable to children under the age of 12 and their families. It has provided opportunities for children to meet and hear directly from the scientists working in the Arctic about their experiences. This kind of interaction inspires children and serves as a good model for how IPY research can be incorporated informally at our nation's museums, zoos and aquariums.

I'm looking forward to hearing from our witnesses about the U.S. role in IPY and some of the neat work that is being planned for the next two years and beyond in the polar regions.

With the encouragement of the Chairman, I had the opportunity to travel with the Science Committee to Antarctica in January. I knew the scenery would be awesome, and it was. I knew the science would be impressive, and it was. The thing I didn't anticipate was the people. They are impressive folks doing amazing work. Some of those impressive folks are before us today. We look forward to hearing from them.

I recognize the ranking Democratic Member, Mrs. Hooley, for any opening statement she may have.